

COVID-19 and the particular risks for people with disability – Roundtable

14 JULY 2020

Minutes and Actions Arising

The Chair opened the fourth meeting of the Roundtable and invited discussion of lived experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Social Services provided an update on the National Disability Workforce Plan, and the Commonwealth provided an update on COVID across the country.

Issues raised:

- Access to PPE equipment in VIC and NSW for allied health and disability support workers.
- Continuity of support for people with disability – reports providers are withdrawing services are without any substitution or timeframe for resumption.
- Workforce shortages and visa issues among disability support workers. The advisory committee will consider this issue on 17 July. The group noted there are visa exemptions in place to support disability support workers. There was also concern over pathways for allied health training becoming unavailable.
- Disability support workers face challenges deciding when to seek medical intervention on behalf of clients.
- Practice of disclosing number of COVID cases in residential buildings and impact on access to care.
- Telehealth requirements stipulating a patient must have seen a GP in person in the previous 12 months.
- Continuing concern about safe management of public transport and disability-specific transport, particularly in relation to school buses.

Key actions:

- Advisory Committee to consider medical escalation and workforce shortages at 17 July 2020 meeting. Victorian Education Department to attend meeting to discuss education concerns.
- Department to further explore issues around access to PPE for allied health and disability support workers.
- Department to circulate the COVID-19 Action Plan.
- Department and DHHS Victoria to explore concerns about accessing residential buildings where there are known COVID-19 cases.
- DHHS Victoria will provide more information on how they are managing distribution of PPE and supporting Indigenous families in lockdown.